

WE-News

Arkansas Department of Workforce Education

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The latest news on career, technical, & adult education in Arkansas

Winter 2005

Changing Face of CTE Brings New Challenges

Walk into any technical classroom or lab at your local high school and you'll quickly realize this isn't your father's shop class.

The face—and soul—of technical training has changed drastically since our parents and many of us hung out in high school.

"Technical education has leaped forward in recent years," Lee Griffith, associate director of workforce training at the Department of Workforce Education (DWE), said.

One of the most obvious changes is technology, which can be seen in everything from tools to research to classroom activities.

But perhaps a bigger change is reflected in the name itself. Gone is the label "vocational training." In its place is the more inclusive "career and technical education"—or "CTE" in educational parlance.

"We're looking at it differently than we used to," Griffith said.

John Davidson, deputy director of CTE at DWE, said the federal government, which funds many of the high school programs

through the Perkins Act, has forced vocational training to change by requiring more accountability from the states.

When Perkins 2 was passed in the early '90s, Davidson said, it set up a system to evaluate the effectiveness of CTE programs in the various states. Perkins 3, enacted in 1998, set up the assessments.

Since then, Davidson said, each state has had to report the success of CTE programs by such means as comparing the number

of CTE students who graduated or dropped out with the larger student population.

This increased accountability is "probably the one single most important thing that has affected career tech," Davidson said.

The outcome is that the success of the state's CTE program is evaluated by the students' academic achievement as much as by their vocational achievement.

In years past, vocational

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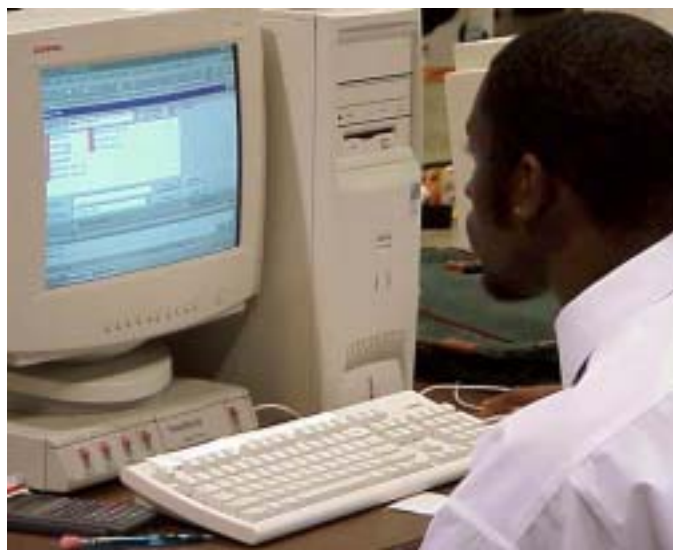
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Editor's Note

Traditionally, New Year's is a time when the sun of yesterday shines on the shadows of tomorrow—a time when we reflect on the past to see into the future.

As 2004 turns to 2005, we are using this issue of WE-News to contemplate how the trends and changes of yesterday and today are shaping the challenges and opportunities the Department of Workforce Education will face tomorrow.



Technology isn't the only change in career and technical education. CTE students competing in SkillsUSA competitions are now held to industry standards.

Changing Face of CTE . . .

Continued from front page
classes were high school add-ons—electives taken by students who had no intention of entering the hallowed halls of college.

Today, with increased accountability requirements, CTE programs are integrated with core academic classes, making them an integral part of a high school education.

These programs are often closely linked to those at the public postsecondary schools in the state, Davidson said.

dents earn college credit for technical courses they take at their school or at a secondary center.

Davidson told the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities (SBWECO) at its October meeting that many students are graduating from high school with 35-36 college credits in CTE courses.

Some of them are just a course or two shy of having an associate's degree.

Lucy Ralston, a board member from Fayetteville,

within those areas—for some of the changes in CTE programs.

"The national clusters project has reshaped the definition of career tech" by broadening the CTE course offerings available to high school students, Davidson said.

In the 1960s, for instance, agriculture, business, and home economics were about the only technical course options available in rural schools, Griffith said.

But today, there's a virtual smorgasbord of programs, ranging from automotive repair to dance to information technology to welding.

Strong ties with industry have made many of the changes in CTE possible.

"There's a much greater tie to industry than there has been in past years," Davidson said.

CTE courses are being developed around industry standards, and more of the technical teachers are coming to the classroom from industry.

"We're building more and more relationships with our industry partners," Griffith said.

As a result, business partners, such as the hotel and lodging industry, are developing educational programs to be used in the schools.

So where is this all heading?

Everything is moving

toward credentialing, Davidson said.

CTE students want a credential that will allow them to follow a career wherever it takes them.

"Twenty years ago, they primarily took career tech and planned to stay in their own community," Davidson said.

But today, mobility is important; students want a credential that is as good in California as it is in Arkansas.

Looking toward the future of CTE, Davidson expects a continued emphasis on work-based learning and internships.

Because of the increase in accountability requirements—and the demand from the workforce, Davidson also anticipates an even stronger push for integrating academic subjects in CTE programs.

The end result is that high school graduates should be college-ready even if they are not planning to go on to college, Davidson said.

Such a push will require a great deal of continuing professional development for teachers, he added.

"When you really stop to think about it," Griffith said, "all of us who are in education . . . are vocational educators in that we're training people to go to work. . . . That's what it's all about."

'[A]ll of us who are in education . . . are vocational educators in that we're training people to go to work.'

—Lee Griffith

One result of this linkage in Arkansas is the growth in secondary area centers—partnerships between colleges, business/industry, and several school districts to provide specialized technical education.

These centers offer high school students courses in fields such as geospatial technology, automotive service, medical professions—courses that many school districts could not afford to provide on their own. ([See Page 3.](#))

Another result is many Arkansas high school stu-

testified to the success of the program, saying her 19-year-old son skipped the first year of college because of college credit he earned in high school tech classes.

Not only do these articulation programs save parents and students college tuition, they also encourage students to continue on to a postsecondary school to get a degree or professional certification.

Davidson also credits the national career clusters project—which identifies 16 broad career areas and then specific career paths

Funding Needed for Secondary Area Centers

If the State Board of Workforce Education and Career Opportunities (SBWECO) has its way, more high school students in Arkansas will be able to take advantage of the career and educational benefits of a secondary area center in the 2005-06 school year.

At its December meeting, the board approved two new secondary area centers—one with Ozarka College in Melbourne and the other with Arkansas Northeastern College in Blytheville.

The Ozarka program would provide training in automotive technology, medical professions education, and criminal justice to students in Izard, Stone, Sharp, and Fulton counties.

Once the center is established, officials plan to add programs in geospatial technology, information science technology, culinary arts/hospitality, and Pro-Start/lodging management.

The proposal for the Northeastern program calls for training in drafting and design, medical professions education, and welding for students in Mississippi, Craighead, and Poinsett counties.

In the future, the center also would offer training in criminal justice, cosmetology, and food production/management and services.

Secondary area cen-

ters provide vocational education to high school students through partnerships with colleges, business/industry, and several neighboring school districts and enable students to earn both high school and college credit for the courses they take there.

"This has been a long-awaited development," Jack Justus, SBWECO chairman, said as the board gave its approval for the centers.

Getting SBWECO approval was the easy part. The next step is getting funding from the Arkansas General Assembly to start the centers.

Arkansas currently has 23 centers that serve about 7,900 students.

The state has stretch-

ed the vocational center aid fund to the maximum, Lee Griffith, associate director for workforce training at the Department of Workforce Education (DWE), said.

"We simply can't grow any more without additional funding," he said.

The average annual cost of running a secondary area center is about \$400,000. To recoup this cost, the center charges participating high schools for each student they send to the center.

These charges, which are part of the public school formula, cover a little less than half the cost of running the center. The state, through DWE, picks up the rest of the tab.

Meanwhile, there are

students in some areas of the state who do not have access to a center.

"We need to remedy that," Griffith said.

He estimates an additional \$2.7 million would be needed in 2006 and an additional \$2 million in 2007 to pay for the anticipated growth in secondary area centers.

School officials involved in the Northeastern and Ozarka centers are willing to do what it takes to get the funding.

"We're really excited about the possibility of getting this in place," Doug Rush, president of Ozarka College, told the SBWECO members.

He said he will be working with legislators to get the money for the centers.

CTE not a Dead End

It's time to end the perception that career and technical education (CTE) is for entry-level, dead-end jobs.

Frankly, as a nation we can't afford to think that way any longer if we want our country to be able to compete globally by having the best and most skilled workers.

China and India, our biggest competition, are training hundreds of thousands of workers every year with practical and technical skills.

Many jobs in engineering technology, business, health professions, construction, law enforcement, etc., require an



associate's degree—something many Arkansas students can start on through high school CTE courses.

According to an article in the January edition of Reader's Digest, someone with an associate's degree earns, on average, \$16,000 more a year than a high school graduate.

Citing statistics from a few years back, the article stated that a worker with a bachelor's degree earned a median salary of \$686 per week while the average worker with an associate's degree made \$639—that's a difference of only \$2,600 per year.

The Grades Are in for Adult Education

The report card is out for the 2003-04 school year.

And Arkansas' adult education providers should be beaming with pride.

They met all their federal performance benchmarks—and then some.

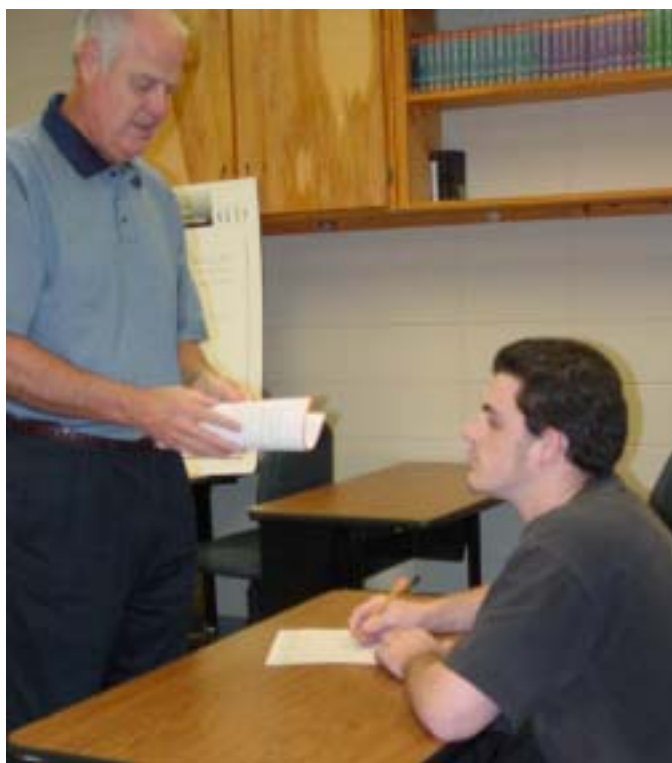
The benchmarks, required under Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, of the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, provide the minimum standard adult education programs must reach in a particular state.

Using these benchmarks, the report card evaluates adult education performance in three areas—educational gains of students, General Educational Development (GED) pass rate, and percentage of students who meet their employment and/or postsecondary education goals.

Educational Gains

Both the English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic/Adult Secondary Education programs were evaluated to determine what percentage of their students had made educational gains—that is, the number of students who were able to advance to the next level.

Students in each program were divided into six groups, depending on their proficiency.



Bill Flurry, GED examiner at National Park Community College in Hot Springs, prepares a student for the GED test. More than 80 percent of Arkansans taking the GED in the 2003-04 school year passed it.

Each group had its own benchmark.

For instance, according to the benchmark for Adult Basic Education (ABE) students with beginning literacy skills (the equivalent of grades zero through one), at least 26 percent of those students should be ready to advance to the ABE beginning level (or grades two through three).

More than half of the students at the beginning literacy level moved up to the beginning level.

The benchmarks for ESL ranged from 25 percent to 30 percent for the various levels. Yet 39 percent to 59 percent of the ESL students made edu-

cational gains.

The benchmarks for Adult Basic/Adult Secondary Education programs ranged from 26 percent to 33 percent.

The actual success rate was 53 percent to 58 percent.

GED Pass Rate

Last year, 7,579 Arkansans took the GED test; 6,325—or 83 percent—passed.

Nationwide, 64 percent of the people who took the GED passed.

Goals Met

In this same timeframe, 1,848 Arkansans enrolled in adult education programs entered employment—that's 80 percent

of those who had set employment as a goal and responded to the adult education surveys. The benchmark for this goal was 35 percent.

Another 1,125 students improved their employment (78 percent of those who had set that as their goal and responded to the surveys). The benchmark was 45 percent.

And 1,113 students went from the adult education programs to postsecondary education. The benchmark was 35 percent, but 77 percent of the students who had set this goal reached it.

The Future

Arkansas adult education providers have met or exceeded their performance benchmarks each year since the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 went into effect.

But it won't be easy to exceed the benchmarks in the future as federal officials have raised the bar.

Instead of using negotiated benchmarks, the adult education programs, beginning with this school year, must meet or exceed their actual results from previous years.

Thus, all the adult education programs for this school year must have the same or better success rates than they had in 2002-03.

The 2003-04 success rates will be used as the benchmarks for the 2005-06 school year.

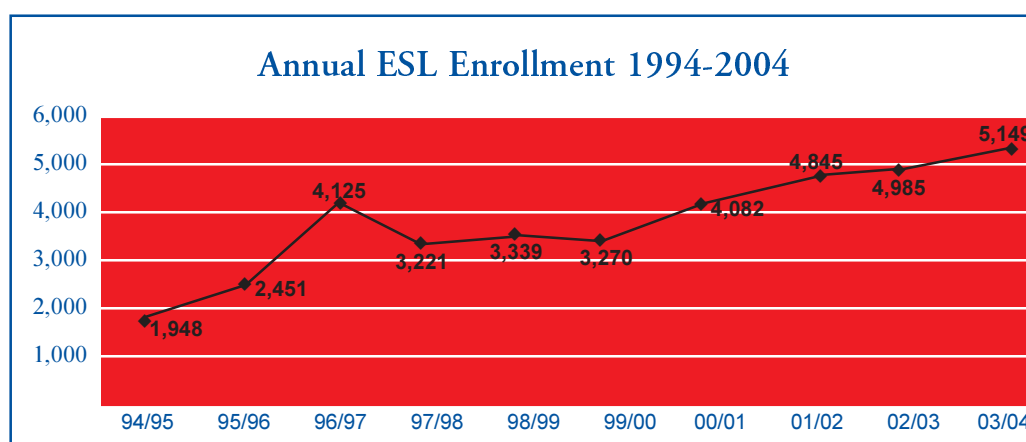
Immigration Creates Demand for ESL Classes

Over the past few years, Hispanics have been moving to Arkansas in record numbers—far surpassing U.S. Census Bureau projections.

In 1990, Arkansas was home to nearly 20,000 Hispanics. By July 1995, the state's Hispanic population had grown to 27,000.

Based on that growth, the Census Bureau projected the state's Hispanic population would gradually grow to 33,000 by 2000 and 67,000 by 2025.

Instead, the state saw a phenomenal increase—about 340 percent from 1990 to 2000—in its Hispanic population. By 2000, nearly 87,000 Hispanics called Arkansas home. And the number



continues to grow. Another 10,000 Hispanics moved here over the next two years.

(Research by the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville shows that the majority of Hispanics in Arkansas are moving from other states.)

The resulting change in Arkansas' population is creating new challenges for the state's workforce education programs, especially the English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

Dr. Philip Less, ESL program advisor for the state, said enrollment in Arkansas' free ESL classes has more than doubled over the past 10 years—from 1,948 students to 5,149.

Because of this growth, the ESL program has become a larger piece of the adult education pie with ESL students making up 15 percent of adult education enrollment. Ten years ago, they made up less than five percent of the total enrollment.

But the funding for ESL

programs isn't keeping up with the growth. Besides getting a share of adult education funds, Arkansas' ESL programs receive \$130,000 annually as part of a federal English Literacy and Civics Education (EL/Civics) grant.

Less said this grant is shared by 15 programs throughout the state, which use the money to help ESL students learn to cope in their new communities. One EL/Civics project, which focuses on the U.S. educational system, teaches ESL students how to interpret their children's report cards, promote good study habits in their children, participate in parent/teacher conferences, and become more involved in their children's schools.

Another project uses local newspapers to help ESL students read employment ads, compare grocery ads, and learn about local, national, and world events.

But the money for ESL programs doesn't stretch

far enough. Less said there are waiting lists for students to get into some ESL programs, because there aren't enough teachers to handle the demand.

"The programs could use more money to hire more teachers," he said.

For instance, Northwest Arkansas Community College in Rogers is the largest ESL provider in the state. Although it offers dozens of free ESL classes a week, Less said, it still has a waiting list and does not have the financial resources to expand any further.

Learning English is crucial for Hispanics who want to realize the American dream, but they also have other needs.

According to a congressional news release put out a few years ago,

♦ Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be employed in low-wage jobs that are less likely to offer health insurance and other benefits. Only 14 percent of

Continued on next page

WE--News

WE--News is a quarterly publication of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education.

For more DWE news, see <http://dwe.arkansas.gov/DeptDir/news.htm>.

To submit items for the Spring WE--News, contact the Communications Office, 501-682-1701, by March 21.

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Adult Education Goes the Distance

Inspired by successes in higher education and professional development, adult education in Arkansas is going the distance to help more adults improve their academic and workforce skills.

Using distance learning technologies, adult education providers are removing many of the barriers—such as transportation, child care, and work schedules—that prevent some adults from continuing their education.

In 2002, Arkansas' adult education director, along with directors from 12 other states, joined with researchers from the University of Michigan to form a consortium, Project IDEAL (Improving Distance Education for Adult Learners), to develop, pilot, and evaluate distance education programs to see if distance learning would work for adult students with the most basic skills.

Five adult education centers in Arkansas—those in Camden, Conway, Fort Smith, Jonesboro, and at Rich Mountain Community College—signed onto Project IDEAL as pilot sites, offering the GED Connections, Skills Tutor, and PLATO curricula online.

In the second year of the project, three times as many adult students enrolled in the distance programs as compared with

the first year.

Of the distance students who post-tested, 46 percent had made at least one level of educational gain, and 43 percent had made two levels of gain.

"Although these programs are still in the experimental stage," Nancy Sparks, an adult education program adviser, said, "it appears that distance education could be successfully used to reach adult learners who are unable to attend the traditional adult education classroom."

All of the pilot sites except Jonesboro are in their third year of the project.

Meanwhile, adult education providers across the state are previewing a new distance learning product to help students prepare for the General Educational Develop-

ment (GED) test.

Put out by McGraw Hill Interactive, the *GED Integrated Online Solution* allows students to study for their GED in the classroom, at home on their computer, a coffee shop "hot spot"—anywhere there's an Internet connection.

The software package provides 115 lessons that cover all the objectives of the latest version of the GED test.

CD-ROM features include an audio tutor; videos for science, social studies, and math; a calculator; interactive timelines for U.S. and world history; response grids; hyperlinks to a glossary; and a variety of screen interactions.

Each GED subject area has a pre-test, lessons, quizzes, remedial lessons and quizzes, unit tests, and a post-test.

Although the software allows for distance learning, students are not out there on their own.

The system lets them send a message to a teacher anytime they have a problem or a question in a lesson.

Likewise, it lets the teacher monitor students, track their progress, respond to their questions, and send individual or group messages.

"Historically, classroom-based adult education programs haven't been accessible to everyone," Sparks said.

Distance education will increase access and provide more options to adult learners, she added.

Adult Learners

The majority of adult learners in Arkansas—69 percent—are between the ages of 19-44.

Immigration Creates Demand . . .

Continued from Page 5

Hispanics are employed in professional and managerial positions.

- ♦ 22.8 percent of Hispanics live below the poverty threshold compared with 7.7 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

- ♦ 57 percent of Hispanics over the age of 25 have a high school diploma compared with 88 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

- ♦ 10.6 percent of Hispanics have a bachelor's degree compared with 28.1 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

With Arkansas' growing Hispanic population, these statistics cannot be ignored. The state's ESL programs will need to continue to expand to meet the language needs of new Hispanic immigrants.

"With stronger English

language skills," Less said, "Arkansas' newest immigrants will become more effective workers, parents, and citizens in their communities."

(ESL classes serve anyone whose first language is not English. The Arkansas Department of Education identified more than 84 languages spoken in Arkansas homes with school-age children in 2002-03.)

Planning for the Future

ARS Shaping Vision 2010

Borrowing a chapter from academia, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is working on a five-year strategic plan to help it meet future challenges.

John Wyvill, ARS commissioner, said the agency has used performance-based budgeting, but this will be its first strategic plan.

In the process of putting together ARS Vision 2010, the staff will "try to anticipate future needs," Wyvill said.

He has asked staff members to draw from their expertise and experience to anticipate these needs and envision the agency's role in meeting those needs.

The resulting plan, modeled on those used by colleges and universities, will guide the agency in its short-term and long-term planning and help it tailor its services to the changing needs of Arkansans. Wyvill hopes to have the plan in place this summer.

The plan will address several issues facing ARS.

The three "R's"—retirement, recruitment, and retention—create an immediate issue ARS must address. In the next three to five years, Wyvill said, the agency will lose a third of its counselors to

retirement.

That will necessitate a massive recruitment effort to attract qualified counselors and a professional development program to retain the new staff members.

Placing those counselors is also a challenge—given Arkansas' changing population demographics.

As more people move into northwest Arkansas,

more ARS services will be needed in that area, Wyvill said. And counselors in towns with shrinking populations may have to cover a broader area.

A major issue for everyone working in rehabilitation is the rapid evolution of the technology used to assist people with disabilities.

This technology ranges from software that enables visually impaired people to use computers

to devices that help others become more mobile.

As an example of the changing technology, Wyvill said researchers expect wheelchairs will be obsolete within 25 years as medical breakthroughs will be able to correct spinal cord injuries and defects.

Another issue is the rising cost of tuition at technical institutes and other postsecondary programs used to train ARS clients.

DWE to Help Returning Veterans

The effects of the war in Iraq may be felt for years to come in the Department of Workforce Education (DWE) as it offers a helping hand to returning veterans.

One of the first DWE services to feel the effects will be the State Approv-

ing Agency works with 2,000-2,500 veterans and dependents who are receiving benefits, Emil Mackey, program manager, said.

But this summer, 200 Arkansas troops serving in Iraq are scheduled to come home.

ans, informing them of the services it provides.

Many of these veterans will enroll in colleges, universities, and apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) also may be dealing with the aftermath of Iraq.

Founded as part of the national vocational rehabilitation effort to help World War I veterans with combat-related disabilities, ARS may be working with disabled Iraq veterans in the future.

Commissioner John Wyvill said the ARS will work with the Veterans Administration and other programs to help disabled veterans learn new job skills and lead productive lives.

'We could get more new requests in one month . . . than we normally get in six to eight months.'

—Emil Mackey

ing Agency for Veterans Training, which approves and monitors educational and training programs for compliance with federal and state regulations so veterans and their eligible dependents can receive educational benefits under the G.I. Bill.

In a typical year, the

Many of those will apply for the first time for G.I. benefits.

"We could get more new requests in one month . . . than we normally get in six to eight months," Mackey said.

The agency sends a welcome-home letter to returning Arkansas veter-

WE-Calendar

January

5

DECA State Executive Council Meeting, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Holiday Inn Select, Little Rock

10

85th Session of the Arkansas General Assembly convenes, noon



17

Martin Luther King Day, state offices closed

18

Adult Education Legislative Breakfast, District 1, 7-9 a.m., Statehouse Cafeteria

19

Senate and House Education Committees meeting, 2:30 p.m., Room 171

20

Adult Education Legislative Breakfast, District 2, 7-9 a.m., Statehouse Cafeteria

25

Adult Education Legislative Breakfast, District 3, 7-9 a.m., Statehouse Cafeteria

27

Adult Education Legislative Breakfast, District 4, 7-9 a.m., Statehouse Cafeteria

February

3

SBWECO meeting

6, 7

DECA Arkansas State Leadership Conference, Holiday Inn Select, Little Rock

10

JAG quarterly professional development meeting, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Metropolitan Vocational Center, Little Rock

13-19

Career and Technical Education Week

15

CTSO exhibit, Capitol Rotunda

19-26

National FFA Week

21

Presidents' Day, state offices closed

March

30

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Convention, San Antonio, Texas

Career and Technical Education Week



Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) throughout Arkansas will join the rest of the nation in February in bringing awareness to the importance of career and technical education.

Feb. 13-19 has been designated Career and Technical Education Week. This year's observance will follow the theme of "Career Tech: Training Tomorrow's Workforce."



The following week, Feb. 19-26, is National FFA Week, which will follow the theme of "Learn. Lead. Succeed."

As part of the Arkansas celebration, CTSO members will set up displays in the Capitol Rotunda Feb. 15.

